

Kalimpong

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The voice of the Darjeeling Hills

Himalayan Times



Gurungs



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ACTION
T.P.HISHEY

The two evils on
the warpath
DRUGS & AIDS





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of cars, chaotic traffic, pied pipers (and some ingenuityof course)

By Sandip C. jain

One of the most oft repeated comments in Kalimpong is about the traffic in the town- anyone coming to this hills town after a longish period of time or coming for the first time, on seeing the chaotic traffic situation existing here is so visually shocked that the first reaction that manages to escape from him or her is a long and shock-filled "Aambooooooo". This word, of course has no equivalent in the English language but those who know the local lingo will vouch that this single word can convey more than probably what a hundred words in English cannot.

But then one can keep "Aamboooooooing" till one goes blue, black, red, green, white and every other shade in the face but still then, as things stand today, the endless flow of traffic in Kalimpong and the resultant mayhem that it creates, will probably never end. The Police top brass, the administrative bosses and the political leadership have collectively put in hundreds of hours in trying to conjure up a magical solution to our traffic predicament, but all have failed.

The situation is so bad that all well wishers of Kalimpong have at some time or the other, racked their brains into trying to think of a solution to this crisis but needless to say but no one has come even remotely close to suggesting a realistic way out.

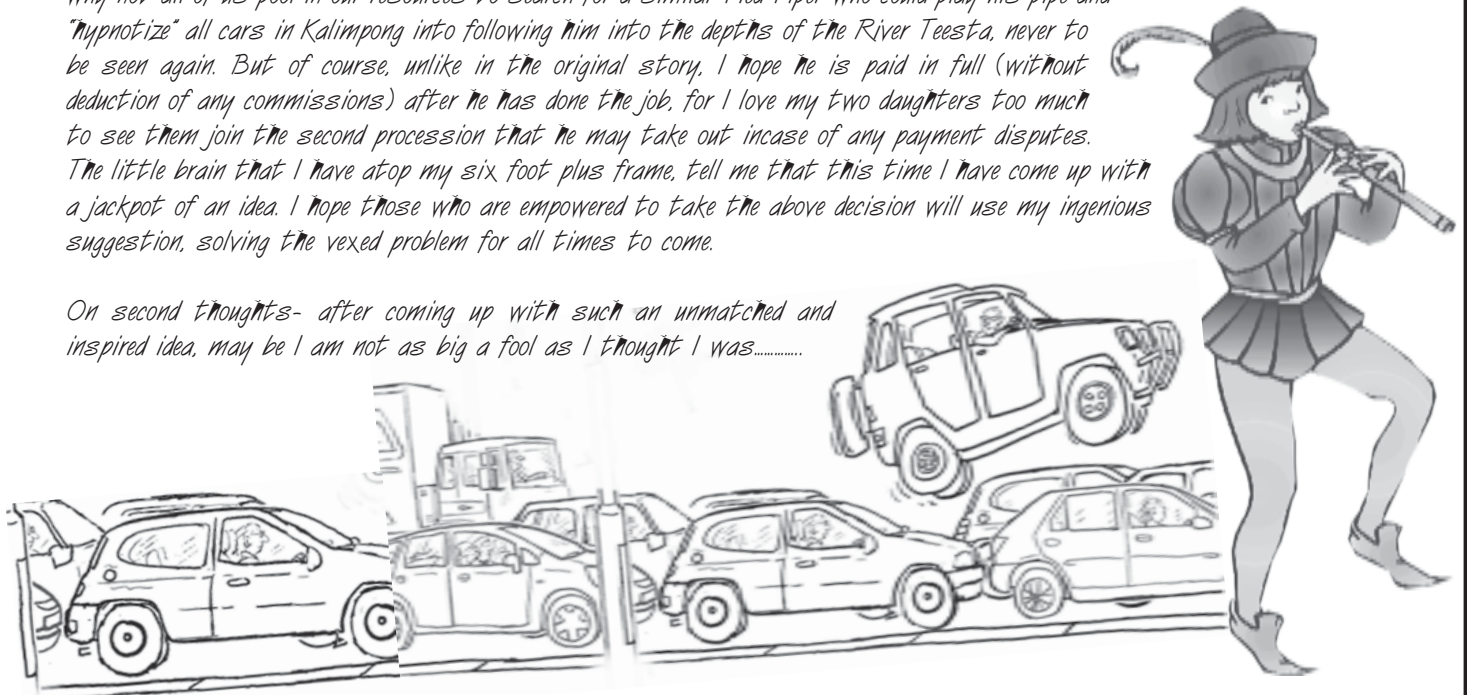
We at Himalayan Times, too had at one time taxed our brains over the matter but being the fools that we are (fools because who else would continue running a newspaper which makes a loss issue after issue, which the so called "intellects" of the region think is a rag sheet and whose editor, yes- meaning myself- is hated and shunned by most, despite the fact that Himalayan Times is the highest circulated paper in the Darjeeling Hills), we predictable came up naught.

The other day while attending some function in St. Augustines' School; I had the privilege to watch the little children from the KG section perform a very entertaining musical representation of the "Pied Piper of Hamelin".

Now, seeing the program has given me a brilliant idea which can rid us of our traffic woes once and for ever. The idea being, why not all of us pool in our resources to search for a similar Pied Piper who could play his pipe and "hypnotize" all cars in Kalimpong into following him into the depths of the River Teesta, never to be seen again. But of course, unlike in the original story, I hope he is paid in full (without deduction of any commissions) after he has done the job, for I love my two daughters too much to see them join the second procession that he may take out incase of any payment disputes.

The little brain that I have atop my six foot plus frame, tell me that this time I have come up with a jackpot of an idea. I hope those who are empowered to take the above decision will use my ingenious suggestion, solving the vexed problem for all times to come.

On second thoughts- after coming up with such an unmatched and inspired idea, may be I am not as big a fool as I thought I was.....





Gurungs

DISTINCTIVE CULTURE, RELIGION AND CEREMONIES

Class and Hierarchical Organisation

Gurung clans are divided in to two groups 'charjat' (four castes) clan and 'solajat' sixteen castes clan. Originally 'Lama', Lem', Klay', 'Kon' were the prevalent categories of Gurungs but subsequently they came to be known as 'Lama', 'Lamchane', Ghale and Ghotane'. This system of clans is typical only of the Gurungs.

The four castes are:-

- Ghale (Klay): the word is a variant of 'gual'. 'Gyal' is the Tibetan word for king (Gyalpo). As enumerated in the earlier history of Gurungs, Kings of the Gurung community were the 'Ghales'
- Ghotane (Kon): Ghotane is also known as Gurungs and earlier they were 'kons' which signified their official position. According to Gurung Tradition, the 'kon' which signified their official position. According to Gurung tradition, the 'kon' or 'Ghotane' was the administrative official of 'Ghaley' King.
- Lama (Lam): Lama is well conversant in performing religious rites and in studying religious books.
- Lamchane (Len): Lamchane does not have any specific profession or trade. They can take any profession in accordance to their will and aptitude.

All other clans not included in the 'Charjat' form part of 'Solajat'. The solajat clan comprise of 'Bhaeze', 'Garbu', Kepze', 'Kulal', 'Koke', 'Kromze', 'Kroe', 'Lehge', 'Morme', 'Nume', 'Panze', 'Plopo', 'Pom', 'Tele', 'Tenla' and 'Thimze'.

Culture

Animism and Bonism (nature worship) are the dominant factors which have influenced the culture of the tribal community of the Gurungs. Even after migrating from Mongolia to Tibet and china and hence to the south of the Himalayans, the Gurungs have retained their cultural heritage.

Religion, faith and beliefs

Bonistic Mahabuddism is the religion of the Gurungs. They are nature worshippers because they believe that is the creator, the protector and the support of all human beings. Gurungs worship mountains, rivers and big trees because they believe that the nature gods 'live in these areas or places. They also worship moon 'Iha' (snakes) 'Ihoo' and local gods 'shildo-nado' who could be present in any form in and around their village.

Religious rituals of the Gurungs are presided over by the priests known as 'Pachyu' or 'Poju' and 'Gyabri' or 'Klebri'. The 'Poju' uses horoscopes of the person for analyzing illness and bad luck. The rituals performed in illness is 'choju teh', 'tushen teh' or 'sinji teh'. The 'Klebri' performs 'plahin laba teh', 'Kimru teh' and 'Chebu teh' in removing illness. The 'poju' and 'klebri' belong to the solajat group. The Lama 'Bonpo' is also central to the Gurung religion and performs all religious rites. The religious rites of the Gurungs can be termed as primitive commensurate to triblas being animistic in nature.

The interaction between Maha Bodism and Bonism gave rise to Bajrayani sect of Buddhism. Here the five elements are represented by five Mahagurus 'Aah Guru', 'Jyahan Guru', 'Urgen Guru' 'Kyitam Guru' and 'Chityam Guru'. The religious holy book of the Gurung is 'Kyarlo'. The religious head of the entire Gurung community is his holiness Tulku Rimpoche Karma Wangchuk Gurung.

Shamanism and Gurungs

Shamanism is yet another primitive trait of the Gurungs. Shamanism is a religious phenomenon in which Shamans in a state of trance is believed to have powers to heal the sick by communicating with the world of the dead. Religion is a system or set of systems in which doctrines, myths, rituals and sentiments are interconnected. Thus in order to understand a given belief that occurs in such a system, it is necessary to view everything through the eyes of the Gurung believer. Historically, religion both ancient and modern embrace primitive religion practices as can be witnessed in the Gurung society in which Bonism, Shamanism and Buddhism are prevalent. Shamanism is prevalent in the religious lives of Gurungs because they believe that shamanis can communicate with the Gods to solve the divine mysteries of illness.

'Kul Puja'

'Kul puja' 'Pitri Puja' (ancestral worship) is performed by the Gurungs to pay obeisance to the spirits of departed ancestors. In the room in which the head of the family sleeps, a small niche is partitioned in a corner which serves as a shrine to perform ancestral puja. This prayer corner is known as 'Bhanrar'. This place is sacred and only close members of the house are allowed to enter. Married daughters are not allowed to enter the room. Prayer is offered by the head of the family every morning and once or twice a year bigger prayers are held. The shrine is comprised of a wick lamp, a few stones signifying



the deities. This is a primitive trait but a distinctive culture preserved by the Gurungs to the present day.

'Goth' puja

The Gurungs pay great reverence towards these animals as they are greatly dependants on them for sustenance. Once or twice a year they conduct 'Goth puja' (cow shed prayer) is the presence of the cows. A deity is prepared out of flour and in their prayer, they invoke the deity to protect their animals particularly the cow to bestow its blessings for constant flow of milk, butter and curd. Here also a fowl is sacrificed and offered to the deities. 'Goth puja' is also performed by 'Klebri' or the 'Poju'.

'Thonte' (chasing away of spirits)

This rite takes place on a Sunday in the month of 'Chait' (March-April). This rite also can be seen as a primitive trait. In this ritual, young boys of the village of about 16-17 years get together and sacrifice a chicken. They move in a group with one boy carrying an incense bowl. While walking through the village, they make a deafening noise with drums, bells and vessels. They wave the chicken in different directions to chase away evil spirits, carriers of

sickness etc. when they complete the tour of the village they throw the chicken far away. The ritual of 'Thonte' is graphically described by the French writer Bernard Pignede in his book 'The Gurungs'. The Gurungs of Charkhole village observe this rite every year.

Village shrine

Apart from the village central shrine for community prayer, a Gurung village also has another shrine within the village. It is a shelter the base of which is 1.50 by 2 metres. Three walls of stone support a small roof of stone slab, the front being open. The shrine is erected for the protection of the village. On a stone shelf in the shrine are placed three erect stones the tops of which are roughly rounded. The three stones represent a cow, a bull and a dog. The cow provides sustenance through milk, the bull helps in ploughing the field and the dog help keeping the sheep herds together. The rituals in the shrine are not elaborate and consist mainly of sacrificing chicken, fish and goats. The headman of the village provides most of the offerings which the priest needs. The worship in the shrine is also connected with fertility. Families also pray by sacrificing goat and chicken. Main prayers are offered in 'Chait' (April-May) and 'Kartik' (October-November)

CERMONIES

Gurungs have their own culture and traditions from birth to death. They perform every ceremony in their own peculiar way. The ceremonies are performed by the 'Klebri', 'Poju' or

'Lama'. However the presence of the maternal uncle 'Ashyon' in all ceremonies and rites is mandatory. There is a strong belief that any ceremony in the absence of the 'Ashyon' has no spiritual and social values.

Birth Ceremony

Three days after the birth of the child, the house is cleaned and priests sanctify the newly born baby and the mother. In the case of a male child, the naming ceremony is performed on the sixth day and in the case of a female child, she will be given a name by the priest on the seventh day. The baby is given solid food at the age of six month. The occasion is known as 'Pasmi'.

Hair cutting ceremony – 'Kolo Krafawa'

The first haircut is also known as 'Chhewar' is performed when the boy attains the age of five years. The boy is taken to the cowshed and before removing his hair he is tied with a 'damlo', a thickly woven thick jute tape, the type of tape used to tie cows in the cowshed. A small piece of hair is cut by the 'Ashyon', the maternal uncle as a symbolic gesture. His hair is shaved and bathed. The 'Ashyon' applies Tika and blesses the child. After the haircut, the 'damlo' is untied signifying a free run to the child to roam around the house premises.

Marriage ceremony

Gurungs generally marry within their community. To an outsider it may look like endogamy, but it is not so. Within the Gurung clan, they cannot marry within the same sub caste. For example 'Charjat Gurung' may marry within 'Charjat' but of different 'thar' (sub caste). 'Lama' can marry a 'Lamchane' but a 'Lamchane' cannot marry a 'Lamchane'. Therefore all marriage among the Gurungs is exogamous. Negotiations concerning the possible marriage of a man and a woman are conducted by the parents of the two interested parties. Here again the 'Ashyon', the maternal uncle plays an important role in the negotiation. Over the years, more freedom of choice has been given to the younger generation. However, the wished of parents strongly influence the children. Once the negotiations are finalised, the family of the boy sends a silver coin as a symbolic gesture to confirm an engagement prior into the marriage. In such negotiation, the local lama plays the role of an advisor. He follows the rules of Tibetan/Gurung horoscope to give his opinion. In this system of marriage, the 'Lho' birth signs of the boy and girl are taken into consideration. The date of the marriage is fixed by the Lama

It may be pertinent to mention that marriage among children of brothers and sisters (cross cousins) is allowed, but the Gurungs are now avoiding this type of marriage for obvious reasons. Marriage among children of brothers (parallel cousins) is strictly prohibited. Widow Remarriage is not looked down upon as a breach of social norms. According to the custom, the marriage party is led by the groom's maternal uncle. The groom's father carries a 'bercha' (spear). Some 'kodo' millet wine, fruit, 'sel



Photo: B.P.Gurung

roti" (bread made out of rice flour), curd is a 'theki' (wooden container), ornaments, a set of clothes for the bride and 'totola' flowers are carried by the groom's party. The participants sing and dance with beating of drums, 'madal'.

On reaching the bride's house the party is received by the girl's parents and her maternal uncle. They are ushered inside the house and made to sit down on the floor covered with 'rahri'. Marriage rituals of the Gurungs are very simple. Marriage is solemnised by the maternal uncle and no priest "Poju" or 'Klebri' are required. The groom's father and maternal uncle offer the items taken by them, which are accepted by the girl's father which tantamounts to their approval for the marriage. The boy and the girl take vows and exchange 'khada' (white/golden coloured scarves). The 'klebri' if present recites the holy scriptures.

The marriage remains incomplete till the bride's father holding a spear in his hand announces three times before a Council of elderly persons of the community, that he has no further responsibility or liability towards his daughter and she is given in marriage to the bride groom. The members of the council form key witnesses to the marriage. The council then announces the boy and girl as husband and wife. Then the feast commences with all its gaiety. Married women of the Gurung community do not put on vermilion.

When the groom's party is about to return to their home, as part of the marriage ritual the brother carries her on his back from inside the room up to the main door of the house.

Outside the main door of the groom's house, the bride and groom are received by the elders with earthen lamps and rice on a plate. The couple put some coins on the plate and enter the house. 'Chutke' and 'Jhamre' dances are performed during the marriage.

Gurungs

RODHI

The 'Rodhi' concept is typical of the Gurungs only. This is one of the attributes of the Gurung tribe which manifests a distinctive culture. Rodhi started as a community room where the youth assembled to promote healthy fellowship.

Every Gurung village has a 'rhodi ghar' (Rodhi house) which is supervised by a 'rhodi ama' (Rodhi mother). Over a period of time, the system has undergone changes and the 'rhodi' concept has become somewhat different. 'Rodhi' which was started by the youth has now become more formal. Though it is still youth orientated where cultural activities are encouraged by a 'Frang Kra' (head) who is nominated by the community. The 'rodhi' now is also a place where young girls are

taught to weave 'rahri'. The problems of the village are discussed and solutions suggested which is presided over by the 'Frang Kra'. The tradition of 'Rodhi' is unique and no other tribe or race has such a tradition.

FOLK DANCES

Ghatu.

This is a very popular folk dance which has difficult dance movements. The dance begins with divine mantras. The dance is inaugurated in 'Magh' (end January) and completed at the full moon in 'Baisakh' (end of April). Usually two to four girls, between 12 to 14 years, perform the dance. The final performance lasts from morning till evening for three days. Not a single episode must be omitted. If a mistake is made it is believed that the dancing girl will become sick and may even die. This is why the dancers are changed every three years. It has been noticed that many times the dancers are possessed and they are taken out of the trance by 'Guru Aba'.

Different types of Ghatu dance forms are:

Baramasay Ghatu: This dance is performed any time of the day and is more a form of entertainment.

Sati Ghatu: This form of dance is based on the lamentation of Queen Pamphawati from the principality of 'thak'

Kusunde Ghatu: This dance always takes place at night. In this dance form the singer tells the story of slaying of a deer with each girl dancing with a bow and arrow. In this dance the drummer has a very important role to play. The 'madal' drummer must play the full rhythm and later the full counter rhythm, otherwise it is believed that the girls will be very ill and even die.

Sorathee: This dance is performed by girls with one 'madal'. The dance narrates the story of a king who had sixteen concubines.

Kaura: This is performed by a group of girls. This is a very rhythmic and graceful dance and is performed on happy occasions.

Chutke and Jhamre: These dances are also performed on happy occasions. These dances are fast and quick matching the fast beat of the 'madal'.

Dohori: The folk songs rendered through 'Dohori' (two way) are also called 'Juwari' are the important part of the traditional culture of the Gurungs community. It is a kind of question and answer song between male and female singers who sing in typical tone and in groups. It is not known when the 'Dohori' started but it is apparent that the songs are related towards romance. Questions are asked through songs



Gurungs

by the female group and the male group is expected to give an apt reply and vice versa. When the rhythm of the music becomes faster, the spectators enter the arena and start dancing 'Jhamre'

DEATH RITES – 'CRA-TOWA'

When person in a Gurungs family dies, the first question that arises is whether the person was initiated into the 'Kul' (ancestry) or not. Depending on the answer to the above question, the deceased person is cremated or buried. Normally the adults are cremated and children are buried. The land for cremation is purchased in the name of the deceased, albeit symbolically throwing a coin on the ground which is known as 'chha kiwa lawa'. The mourning period differs according to the age of the deceased person from three days, seven days to fourteen days. The main mourners stay separately, abstain from taking salt and meat and take food once a day. Every night a cup of rice with butter is kept separately for the departed soul by the son in law. Meanwhile the holy scripts are read continuously by the 'klebri'. As the mourning period comes to an end, the 'klebri' recites that part of the holy script, which deals with the process of the final departure of the soul and its merging with the ancestors. It is believed that the soul of the dead person

remains in the house around the kin members. After death the soul sleeps for three days. On the fourth day, the soul awakes and 'klebri' feeds the soul with a square meal which is known as 'Se-me-kain'.

On the fourteenth day, an effigy of the dead man is made and dressed in his clothes; the effigy is placed in the courtyard of the house. This is called 'Pla'. A bamboo pole 'anla' about 12 feet high is decorated with various types of edibles and is erected in front of the 'pla'. On this pole bread made out of rice, banana 'maci', vegetables 'khru', milk and millet wine are tied around the bamboo pole and these are offered to the deceased. This offering is accompanied by beating of drums.

On the fourteenth day rite 'paye-lawa' is arranged so that the soul will not face any difficulty in its last journey to the other world. Food articles are offered to the effigy 'pla'.

Paya or Arghu can be performed on any block of odd days up to forty nine days, according to the convenience of the bereaved family. One hundred and eight oil lamps are lit in honour of the departed soul. The final ritual is performed by 'Ashyon' the maternal uncle. He makes the mourners taste salt and put a white 'pule' (cap) on the head of each of his nephews marking the end of the mourning period. □

Information collected from Gurung(Tamu)Kalyan Sanghatan,
edited, compiled and further research by Sandip C. Jain

The two evils on the warpath

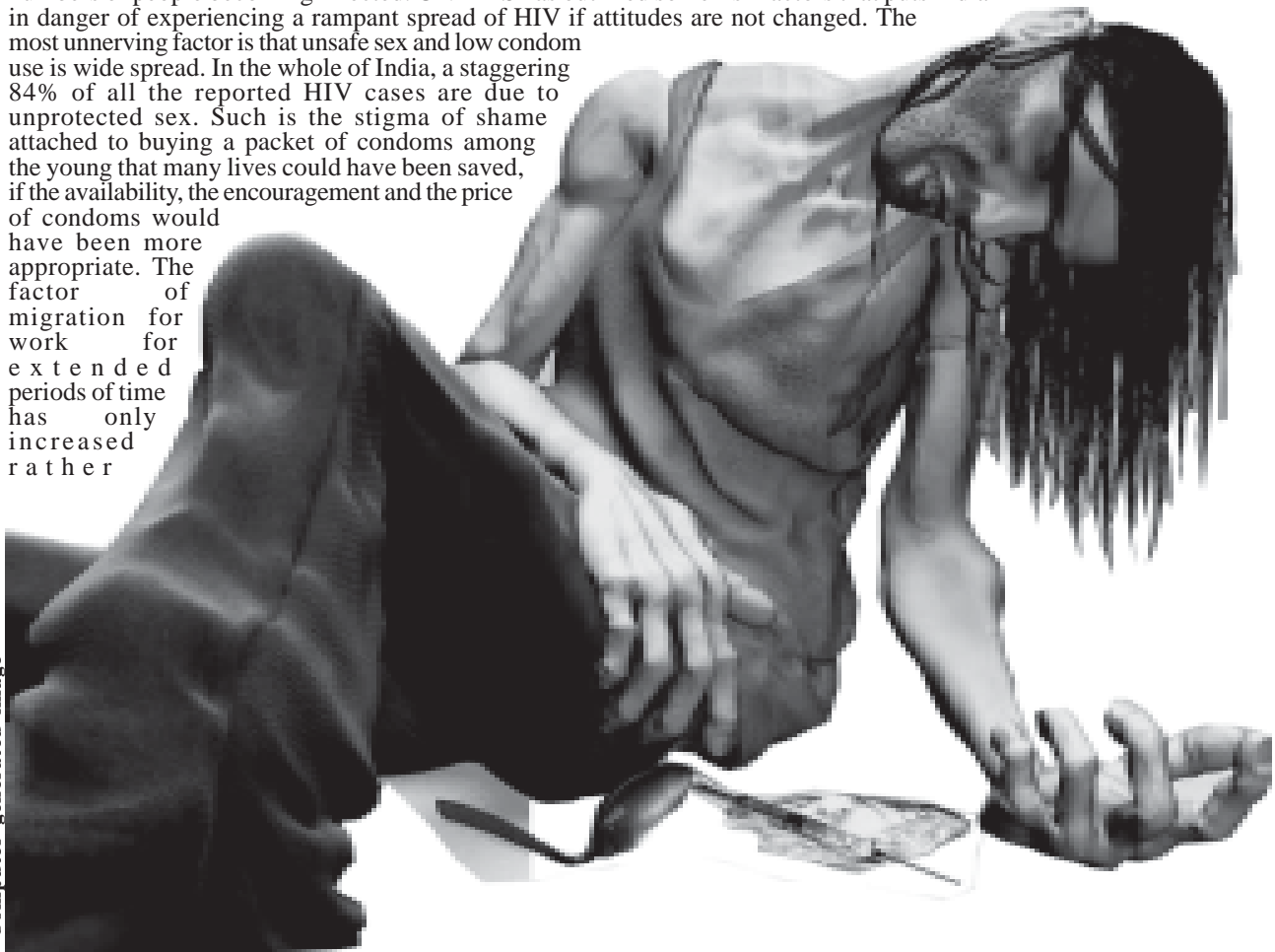
By Ville Saikku & Sandip C. Jain

It is not a coincidence that India is the second most HIV – AIDS infected country in the world and that the hill areas have been classified as a High HIV prevalent area, as reported in June 2006 issue of the *Himalayan Times*. Along with rising infection levels, a local Gangtok paper called *NOW!* wrote about the spread of drugs in the Darjeeling district, with Spasmo Proxyvon, the prescription drug given to girls to ease their period pains becoming the party drug of the youth. It is unfortunate that these two evils, HIV – AIDS and drug abuse go hand-in-hand, one social taboo alongside another. Public denial of both is equally strong and ruthless and has not changed to consider lending a helping hand inside the community. Instead, the people affected by these two evils are branded and ashamed in front of their family and friends and are left to combat their illnesses alone and without a hope in hell. No wonder there aren't many who want to take their family members to the help clinics, for rehab and counselling, or admit that someone inside their family is HIV positive, he or she is just prone all of a sudden to constant fever, nothing more. These problems run deep into the conservative heart of society and go against the prevalent outdated traditions, making the diseases nearly impossible to approach and leave the problems lingering without a proper solution.

India and risk factors

The United Nations has estimated that India with 40% of Asia's population has over 60% of the continent's HIV positive cases. UNAIDS is predicting that by the end of 2006 there will be 5, 7 million people living with HIV in India. Soon the example of the most HIV – infected country in the world, might change from South Africa to India, as India already is the second most infected country on earth and even a small increase in HIV infections could translate into very large numbers of people becoming infected. UNAIDS has outlined some risk factors that puts India in danger of experiencing a rampant spread of HIV if attitudes are not changed. The most unnerving factor is that unsafe sex and low condom use is wide spread. In the whole of India, a staggering 84% of all the reported HIV cases are due to unprotected sex. Such is the stigma of shame attached to buying a packet of condoms among the young that many lives could have been saved, if the availability, the encouragement and the price of condoms would have been more appropriate. The factor of migration for work for extended periods of time has only increased rather

Computer generated image



than declined in the past years. For long periods of time people are away from their social environment provided by their families and community and this can place them outside the usual normative constraints. In such instances, being outside their own social environment might encourage them to take part in risky behaviour. Students studying away from home for many years also fall victim to the less constraint life away from families. A recent study has shown that drug addicts are shifting away from inhaling to injecting hard drugs. 41% of these drug abusers inject with used needles and syringes, which has put them and their sexual partners in the high risk group. Only a reported 3% of those who regularly re-use needles and syringes are using appropriate and effective methods such as alcohol, bleach or boiling water to clean their syringes. And lastly, the low status of women still plagues the Indian society. Unequal power relations, described by United Nations, as the limited access to human, financial and economic assets, weaken the ability of women to protect themselves. The Government of India's response has been to place more funds and efforts into combating the reduction of the risk factors in the last decade, but major challenges still remain. The raising of the overall effectiveness of state – level programmes, increasing safe behaviour and reducing the stigma associated with HIV positive people and drug – addicts among the population, leave a lot to desire. But there is some light at the end of the tunnel, as co-operation of different NGOs ran by socially conscious local people and international volunteers have shown a positive contribution to the fight against AIDS.

Misconceptions and hard-line education

Sexual education is not part of the curriculum of most schools in Kalimpong. Pounding some general information into the heads of hormone – charged youths is a prerequisite to assist in the changing of attitudes, as misconceptions of HIV and AIDS are common. Many people think that HIV can be transmitted through mosquitoes. This is not true, as when you are bitten by a mosquito, the mosquito does not inject blood of a previous victim, but quite happily pumps out your blood instead. HIV can be transmitted through oral sex, even though oral sex is a lower risk activity, but in receptive and insertive oral, it can be possible when there is contact between semen and the mouth membranes. Risk grows with frequency of activity. One cannot however become affected with HIV through casual contact with a HIV positive person. You cannot be infected by shaking someone's hand, by hugging or 'dry' kissing. Neither is it possible through using the same toilet, drinking from the same glass or by being exposed to coughing or sneezing by an HIV positive person.



Finally, HIV and AIDS is not the same thing. HIV; Human Immunodeficiency Virus and AIDS; Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome is the collection of symptoms, diseases and infections associated with an acquired deficiency of the immune system. While HIV is universally accepted as the underlying cause of AIDS, not all HIV positive individuals have AIDS as HIV can remain in a latent state for many years. Such misconceptions are killed by extensive awareness campaigns. In Finland the schools actively take part in eradicating misconceptions and educating the children about the dangers of drug – abuse and HIV. Nurses and doctors give lectures to students from 10-year-olds up until the youths graduate from school at the age of 19 on average. Pounding the information is crucial, even though many critics state that talking about sex and drugs only encourages the young to try these hot topics for themselves. No matter what the public opinion is concerning sexuality and drug experimenting, the children must be knowledgeable enough to know the consequences of their actions. So hitting home the message to the hormone-charged youngsters is important, and if showing graphic pictures and film-clips to scare children into refusing drugs and being careful during sex is considered brutal by some, however, it is highly necessary. Talking of sex and sexuality openly and explaining in detail, with the use of pictures, will hopefully form a lasting impression in the child's mind. Even the police and drug counsellors take actively part in the education of children. Giving lectures on drug-abuse, by describing cases involving youngsters like those sitting in the

classroom listening, has a tremendous effect. Holding my first and last sample of heroin in my hands, listening to list of horrible side-effects and the unimaginable withdraw symptoms, with a policeman reminding me of the legal consequences of abusing such drugs, made a lasting impression on me. Years later, having the unexpected opportunity to meet a poor soul addicted to heroin, I was reminded of the lessons in school and having a pretty good picture in my mind of what sort of hell this man had ended up in. The meeting of a real junky was enough to scare me never to even hold a piece of that evil in my hands again. A situation, where youngsters might be offered and tempted to try a hard drug must be prevented by bashing the barriers of ignorance and shyness, by talking about them often and long enough. In this day and age of gigantic infection figures, hard measures must be taken, or otherwise the society will have to confront a landslide of new HIV infections and pay a high price for its stupidity and shyness. The example of Finland might sound a bit too harsh, but the co-operation of nurses, doctors, counsellors, police and NGOs works as an effective protective net and a similar approach might be considered here in Kalimpong as well. NGOs have started educating the school children, but there are not enough volunteers to reach every child in every school and due to small budgets, the lessons are given to classes only once.

The situation in Kalimpong

In Kalimpong since January, there have been five more new HIV positive cases. This brings the total number of people infected with HIV in the past five years to 25 lost souls. According to the Superintendent of Kalimpong Sub-Division Hospital, Dr. Suva Ratna Pradhan, only in one of the cases, did a boy contract HIV by sharing infected needles, while others are due to promiscuous sexual habits. The infection ratio in most parts of the world is an even split between men and women and the figures from Dr. Pradhan indicate the same. But these figures are far from accurate, as the testing facilities in Kalimpong are non-existent. There is no testing centre in Kalimpong and the nearest and only voluntary free testing centre for the Darjeeling District is located in Darjeeling. No-one will reimburse you for the journey and your day is spent travelling and waiting in line for your test. Most people opt not to go. The Kalimpong Sub-Division Hospital does test some people, but they are very few and far between. If a doctor suspects the worst and after confirming his suspicions with a colleague, only then does the patient get tested. This is not a very common practise unfortunately as the hospital does not have the capacity or the funds to test every single suspected patient. But nevertheless the doctors have started to take action, even if the scale of the operation leaves much room for improvement. The free blood tests that the hospital provides are only reserved for the good Samaritans who willingly donate their blood to save others. The blood – donors are given a mandatory test to identify whether the blood is safe to give to patients. The test searches for signs of malaria, Hepatitis C and B, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases in the blood. So unless you are willing to spare a few pints of blood or your doctor fears the worst, there is no other way to know for sure that you have a clean bill of health. In light of such circumstances and with such inadequate data, the number of infections in the town is impossible to know, but it is safe to assume that it is much higher than the 25 reported cases.

Drugs in Kalimpong

It is even harder to believe that only one case is due to drug abuse. According to Dr. Pradhan and the counsellors working for the newly formed Himalayan Anti AIDS and Narcotic Drugs Society, also known as HANDS, every other household in Kalimpong suffers from drug-abuse, whether it is in the form of alcohol, marijuana or harder drugs like Spasmo-Proxyvon. In the past 10 years, the chemical abuse of prescription drugs has become a major problem. Youngsters are the ones mostly in danger, due to reasons of peer-pressure, curiosity and the fashionable status drugs have acquired through heroes in the music and film business. Youngsters think that it is very 'cool' to try drugs. But no-one becomes a junky over night, or is born into the life of a drug addict. It is a gradual process, starting with cigarettes, alcohol, a few occasional joints to swallowing



painkillers. It can be a gradual progression over a 10 year period, when the soft drug addict, no longer content with marijuana or alcohol, has to look for the 'high' in hard drugs such as brown sugar or Spasmo-Proxyvon. Mr. Dipendra Subba, a counsellor working for HANDS, has seen many families destroyed by substance abuse.

'It's a rough estimate, but usually the people over 30 years of age battle an addiction with alcohol, while the under 30-year-olds are using drugs. The horrible thing is that there is no availability of disposable syringes and needles in the pharmacies, as the police made a point of stopping the issuing of disposable syringes and needles. Now the addicts share or re-use needles and syringes, which might cause a wave of new infections,' Mr. Subba worries. He is right to worry, as Spasmo-Proxyvon, or SP, is more dangerous than brown sugar. It is also a prescription drug, which means that is legal, if you have a prescription that is. Most peddlers and users

don't have one and all the police can do, is lock them up for a night and let them go in the morning. A case is started, with the police keeping an eye on the peddler, but there is no law as yet, which specifically comes down on SP peddlers. This fact drove the Gangtok paper *NOW!* to write a series of articles on the dangers of SP and demand something to be done about the problem. After a long battle of being at the receiving end of public criticism, the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front Party in 2004 promised a new law to deal with the peculiarities of abuse of the 'legal' drug of Spasmo-Proxyvon. In 2006 the Drug Addiction Act was passed, which

gives the police the power of the law to deal with peddlers of SP. This law however is only for Sikkim and does not apply here in Kalimpong. What they came to realise in Gangtok was the awful truth about the drug. The drug is at its most lethal, when it is mixed with water or rum, then cooked and injected into the vein. If used extensively and for a long period of time, it can affect your central nervous system, as SP black-outs and sudden loss of consciousness can kill thousands of neuronal cells in your brain. The drug addict will eventually experience mental illnesses and suffer from emotional imbalance. The constant injecting can block the arteries and thus can cause heart attacks or even paralysis when the artery to the brain is blocked. The problem is that the tablet does not fully dissolve when it is mixed with water or rum and cooked, so sediments start slowly to build up and creates an abscess. The blood flow slowly but surely gets blocked and the limb starts to rot. Many SP addicts have lost limbs to gangrene. The definition of drug abuse, taught by HANDS, is when any chemical alters the mental or physical state of a person. Spasmo-Proxyvon users go through drastic changes and very visible changes in their behaviour. An addict's rhythm is co-ordinated by the drug, so he / she might start sleeping during the day and staying awake at night. The circle of friends, who are not addicts, will disappear to be replaced by people who are paranoid about conducting their affairs behind closed doors and through mysterious phone calls. Money starts to disappear along with some valuables from the house. He or she will loose interest in personal hygiene and appearance, becoming more withdrawn with

sudden burst of anger or tears. Nothing and no-one seems to interest them anymore as the drug has taken hold of the mind and spirit and the only thing that matters is the next injection. A strip of ten tablets of SP can be bought easily for 100 INR on the black market here in Kalimpong.

HANDS

One newly formed NGO, the Himalayan Anti AIDS & Narcotic Drugs Society, or better known as HANDS, has begun to fight the evils of drug addiction and educating the masses on safe sex. This organisation was formed only a few months ago by a group of Kalimpong residents, who felt that action must be taken immediately. The ambitious people responsible for the organisation have big plans for the future, like setting up the first testing centre and a rehab centre for addicts in Kalimpong. At the moment, they are only plans, as the organisation is only funded by a handful of local people. More is needed so that these plans can be realised. The co-ordinator of HANDS, Mrs. Zoramhmangaihi Vuite is already busy organising sex education and drug awareness classes in such schools like Rockvale Academy and St Joseph's Convent. These lectures given mostly to children approaching their teenage years are crucial, as at this age they are very vulnerable to peer-pressure. From a questionnaire on HIV / AIDS given to year 9 students of Rockvale Academy reveals that some misconceptions are still very much alive. Many thought that AIDS can be cured, if medical treatment is given at an early stage and that HIV positive people



are easy to spot, as they are always skinny and look very sick. The most alarming fact was that many would not go to a clinic even if they felt that they had been infected with a sexually transmitted disease. The powerpoint presentation given to the students of Rockvale Academy explained in detail the difference between HIV and AIDS, the symptoms and how they are contracted. HIV and AIDS awareness was followed by a descriptive lecture on drug-abuse. The children, happy to be able to miss a class, listened intently at first, but such detailed subject matters produced a few yawns and bored faces. The people of HANDS estimated that if 10 % of the children take something home from this one short class, their work has had purpose. It is frustrating for people with such dedication and volunteer spirit, that they are unable to do more and teach the children regularly. Hopefully in the future, with more residents contributing to the good cause of HANDS and their work, the energy and money coming from within the society will end up saving the society. The people of HANDS have the right

attitude, by not running away from the social taboos of drug-abuse and HIV infections, but by taking the bull by the horns and doing all they can, to teach, help and assist. It is time the society found out, for real, how bad a problem it is facing, because inadequate data brings nothing but false hope. The Principal of Rockvale Academy, Captain Pradhan urged the children to be brave and honest, when dealing with these issues, because one day you might end up saving your friend's life. So let's be brave and honest and confront these issues. □



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HIMALAYAN TIMES

GEMS OF DARJEELING

Mr. P u r a n G o n g b a

The first person who comes to our mind when we think about the music scene here is Mr. Puraan Gongba. He is one musician who was admired then and still admired now. He started playing the guitar out of interest, and learnt it the hard way.

He used to tirelessly listen to the radio, watch movies and teach himself to place fingers and strum the strings. He played the guitar with many bands like Extreme Moderation and Hillians. In between he went to the United Kingdom for a few years. Here he worked and took guitar lessons. That was when he learnt to read music.

He is fondly called “Joey” by the Darjeeling crowd and the foreigners, who visit his pub called “Joey’s Pub”, the only pub in town.

He tells us that Darjeeling was a happening place back in the sixties. He cherishes the Jazz, Samba, Ramba dances that used to be held at the Gymkhana Club and jokes that the ball room is now called the Dining Room. People from the North-East used to come to Darjeeling to buy the latest gadgets and ask him about the latest in music, he adds.

In spite of his love for music he stopped playing after his last stage appearance in 1985. We asked him the reason and he stated that guys in Darjeeling have lots of talent but there is one to promote them. So they have to give up their love for music soon and start finding other alternate ways to earn their daily bread and butter.

Mr. J e e v a n P r a d h a n

He is one of the most important people in Darjeeling who made Darjeeling stand out in the music scene. He is another person who is admired and loved by music lovers of Darjeeling. He is actively involved in the process of making of musicians through the institute, “Melody Academy” founded by his father Mr. Mahendra Lama in 1978. The institute imparts the musical education to its students for as low as Rs. 150/- per month. The institute also helps outstanding students to prepare for exams affiliated to the “Trinity College of Music” in London.

Mr. Jeevan was introduced forcibly to violin at a tender age of 8 years. But then he never looked back. So when he was in the college he started learning the piano, and at 20, he tried his hands on guitar. Soon he was sharing his musical expertise with students in his father’s academy. He is a member of the Delhi Symphonic Society, the only symphonic society in India.

He used to play for various bands but now he is more into classical. Some of his very popular compositions are Ecstasy, Sunrise and Snake Charmer. Besides teaching in his academy he is a teacher in Turnbull High School, Darjeeling. He has also directed plays like Le Miserables, Evita, Oliver Twist and Jesus Christ Superstar.

T h e F o r b i d d e n F r u i t

Perhaps the first band to make news everywhere, this band was the longest standing band in Darjeeling. It had the biggest impact on the Western Music in Darjeeling. Their musical journey began out of personal interests and actually started in 1970 with the original line-up of Paulgose on guitars and vocals, Jivan Pradhan on bass guitar, Robert Wilson on drums and Viveka Wilson on piano.

Western music and playing guitars were a taboo while Eastern Music was accepted those days. It was a forbidden fruit. So they had to take a bite by all means and cared less about being thrown out of their homes and their grades going down in school.

The band released the first rock album “The First Bite” in their later years. It was a home recording with no proper equipments. Nevertheless the album did make history as the first Rock Album in Darjeeling.



The Diamonds

The Diamonds formed in the second half of the sixties are considered by some as the first band to start Western Rock in Darjeeling. The band line up had Pemba Lepcha, Bikram Subba, Suren Rai, Pravin Gazmer and Subarna Limbu. They started off playing instrumentals by Ventura and Shadows and went on to play the covers of The Beatles, Santana and the like.

The band broke up in the early seventies, members dispersing to form other bands.

Among the band members, Pemba later formed Prism in Kathmandu. Subarna joined him later. They are still playing in the band. Suren Rai holds a government job and Bikram runs a studio in Darjeeling called Ears Studio.

The Downfall

The Gorkhaland Movement which started in the mid 80s had a major impact on the whole social structure of Darjeeling. During this movement which lasted for a few years, Darjeeling saw the finest of schools closing down for months in a row because of strikes, night life ceased to exist and almost all public activities came to a sudden halt. This also had an impact on the music scenario in Darjeeling and the musicians had to go through the darkest period in the history of Darjeeling. Thus started the downfall of music and the social structure of Darjeeling.

Despite the political instability in Darjeeling there were a few bands that were active in some way in the 80s too. The U.S Band was one such band. They had a great fan following even in the major cities of India. Their vocalist, Wangchuk played the role of Jesus Christ in the rock opera "Jesus Christ Superstar" and the band members played the music for it in 1989.

Magnum Opus is another band playing in that decade. The band started in 1980 with Mahesh Thapa in guitars, Keshar Subba in bass, Palden in lead guitar, Mohan Giri in drums and Pasang Bhutia in vocals. Deven Gurung joined the band in 1986 in the second vocals and later became the main vocalist. Like other bands in Darjeeling Magnum Opus had several changes in their line up. But the band is very much alive and they play at least two or three times a year. Though the Gorkhaland Movement brought about a harsh social change in Darjeeling, the band members preferred Music to Drugs.

The Scenario Now

Music and art forms, all have taken a back seat. We rarely have musical events and competitions. Darjeeling is no more a happening place it used to be. But even in this grim scenario there are a few young generation wannabes who give us a glimpse of hope. They are Pralaya, Divine Wreck, Destiny, Hell Riders, Damaged Brain, Liviaton and Whitefield Eclipse. So don't stop reading here. Check out these bands and feel proud about them.

Pralaya

Pralaya is one of the happening bands in Darjeeling. The band was started in 1995 with Rajeev Thatal on vocals, Sonam on guitars, Harish Sena on drums, Dawa Dukpa on guitars and Sachin on keyboards.

Since their formation, they have been playing regularly outside Darjeeling. They have participated and won in several prestigious contests. The list is endless.

Besides these they have held professional shows in Delhi, Lucknow, Nagaland, Bhutan, Mumbai (Independence Rock), Dooars, Kalimpong and Bagdogra. They have played only four times in Darjeeling.

White Field Eclipse

The band consists of four members. They believe that music is one universal language and has no boundaries as to which community it belongs to. Benoy Thapa, the vocalist tells us "that it is something which should be felt from deep within."

They are among the thousands of unsigned artists lingering on the dark side of the story, still searching for that light to come. Their music has a unique experience of the "Acoustics" - all their songs are based on acoustic guitars. Each song of theirs brings a different social message, like the "Blind Man's World" about the misery of a blind man. They believe that no other instrument can produce a sound that is so natural and beautiful as of the acoustic guitar. They are looking for sponsors to promote their music. Anyone there.

Mail them at : whitefieldeclipse@yahoo.com



The Reincarnation R.O.S

The Reincarnation was formed in the year 1998 by some young friends with the intention of playing pure rock 'n' roll music. They first got their break when they opened for rock bands like Pralaya and Magnum Opus. After that show, they have always kept themselves occupied with gigs 'n' concerts in and around Darjeeling and Nepal.

The major events in their musical career was winning the 'I.I.T Spring Fest' in Kharagpur, a major concert in the north region of India. There they stood first and also bagged prizes for the Best Vocals, Best Drummer 'n' Best Guitars. The band also opened for the major upcoming band of India, Parikrama.

The reincarnation comprises of Vicky Labar on vocals, Shadeo Lama on 1st guitar, Sandeep Labar on 2nd guitar, Kalyan Sundas on bass, Diwakar Thatal on keyboards 'n' Sanjit Mothey on the drums.

Like all upcoming bands, the Reincarnation is influenced and finds pleasure in playing musics of Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin, Metallica, Pink Floyd, Europe, Iron Maiden 'n' the ever ruling Queen. But their music is more in the vein of mainstream rock.

Call them at: 9832027348

Divine Wreck

Divine Wreck is another promising band from the young crop of musicians in Darjeeling. Divine Wreck's present line up has Sawan Tamang on vocals, Avoy Thatal on drums, his twin brother, Ajay Thatal on guitars, Xavier Lama on guitar and back vocals and Roshan Pradhan on bass.

They play harsh, rap influenced songs of Limp Bizkit, Rage Against the Machine and Korn. They indulge in covering bands that are gaining popularity worldwide.

ABOVE ARTICLE HAS BEEN REPRODUCED FROM THE INTERNET



Master Lyangoam Vinamra Karthak
Date of Birth 19th January





Darjeeling

Bill Wood's internet page

Darjeeling is the legendary British hill station perched in the foothills of the Himalayas. Located in the northern extreme of the Indian state of West Bengal, Darjeeling is just east of Nepal, just south of Sikkim, and a bit west and south of Bhutan. It is most famous for its once magnificent tea estates. Despite a steady and inexorable decline since independence, roughly a half century ago, these estates still produce a substantial portion of the world's tea.

For rail enthusiasts, however, Darjeeling is better known for its "Toy Train." This famous narrow gauge steam railway plies its way from Siliguri in the plains below up to Ghoom and Darjeeling in the hills.

During my travels in India in November 1995, I flew from Delhi to Bagdogra with the intention of spending ten or so hours on this arduous but spectacular rail journey. However, I met a couple from Derbyshire on the plane who were headed to a friend's timeshare in Ghoom, just five miles south of Darjeeling. They had a private car meeting them at the airport in Bagdogra to take them to Ghoom and they offered me a ride. After some deliberation, I decided to defer my original plan to arrive in Darjeeling via the Toy Train and I accepted their generous offer. It later turned out that this had been a lucky choice. I discovered, after I arrived in Darjeeling, that the railway track had been washed out somewhere between Siliguri and Kurseong and that train service between Siliguri and Darjeeling had been suspended indefinitely.

Even by car, it was a good two hour ride from Bagdogra to Ghoom. The road from Siliguri (which is only a few miles from the airport) switched back and forth as it slowly climbed to Kurseong. As we gained altitude, the air became progressively cooler. Tea plants carpeted the steep hillsides above and below the road.

As we approached Kurseong, the traffic on the road began to increase. I started to notice something quite remarkable: more and more of the vehicles we passed were Land Rovers. Land Rovers are rare enough in most parts of the world but they are virtually unheard of





in India. In fact, until recently, foreign cars of any make were almost never seen in India. That is changing some now as India becomes less isolationist in matters of international trade and foreign investment. However, these were not new Land Rovers. Quite the contrary, these were very old Land Rovers.

I am a serious Land Rover enthusiast. It was not long before I began to wonder what strange force was responsible for this super abundance of Land Rovers on the road to Darjeeling. At first glance most of these Land Rovers appeared to be an unfamiliar silver color. I quickly realized that this was because they were devoid of paint, having been stripped down to their naked aluminum.

At Kurseong the road joined the railway line. From there it was roughly fifteen miles into Ghoom. With each passing mile we passed more and still more Land Rovers. My new friends from Derbyshire dropped me at Ghoom by the railway station which sits right in the middle of the road. Ghoom is the highest point on the railway line.

I went to find a taxi only to discover that the taxi that would carry me the short distance into Darjeeling was (surprise!) an ancient two door Land Rover. I was unable to determine the vehicle's age. However, the Land Rover emblem on the front of the vehicle indicated that it had been manufactured in Birmingham. I squeezed myself and my bag into the back with a dozen or so other passengers and off we went.

When we reached the railway station in Darjeeling, I jumped out of the taxi. Everywhere I looked I saw Land Rovers. Perhaps every fifth car was a Land Rover. Fully half of the taxis must have been Land Rovers. I took this as a very favorable omen. Moreover, the air was cool and clear. After the stifling heat and oppressive air pollution of Delhi this was a most welcome relief.

The couple from Derbyshire had recommended that I book myself into the Windamere Hotel. This famous institution had first opened its doors as a hotel back in 1939 during the final years of the British Raj. In the preceding half century it had done service as a residence for bachelor tea farmers. Luck was with me once again and even though I had no advance booking, I managed to secure myself a room for the duration of my six day stay. The hotel itself was a series of airy buildings situated on the top of Observatory Hill. The majestic snow capped Himalayas dominated the horizon. The view was quite stunning!

During my stay at the Windamere I met many interesting travellers from throughout the English speaking world. Many were either beginning or ending treks through the Himalayas. Some, like me, had come to visit Darjeeling with less ambitious plans. In my many conversations, I encountered a few competing theories regarding the source of the many Land Rovers. The truth, it turns out, is that "virtually every tea garden in Assam, Dooars and Darjeeling used Land Rovers. As they became long in the tooth and were retired from service, they were picked up by taxi operators in Darjeeling for obvious reasons." (Thanks to one of my correspondents for this



clarification of history.) And today, 40 or so years later, these machines are kept running by the ingenuity and pluck of their current owners plus, of course, a bit of that traditional Land Rover legacy for durability.

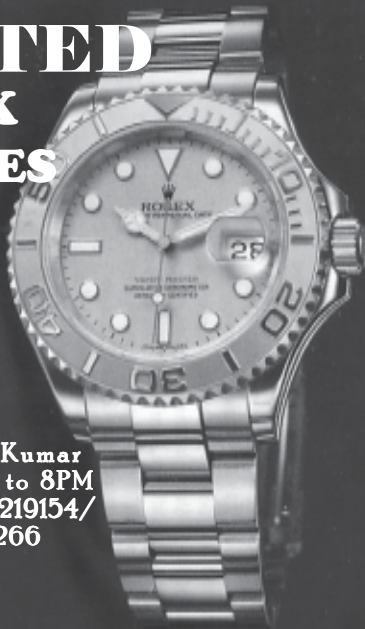
Eating is always a chancy thing in India. I had already gotten quite sick at what is probably the second best hotel in Agra. So it was with some misgivings that I discovered that the Windamere was “American plan” only. The restaurant offered both Indian and English dishes at every meal. The Indian food was never hot (spicy) and the English food was invariably overcooked and quite heavy (which I am told is how it’s supposed to be served). However the fresh vegetables were sterilised, the water was potable and the tea divine. One of the things I had already learned on this trip is that everything is relative; in India the Windamere was a treasure!

It turns out that I am not alone in this opinion. Ms. Mary Anne Morel of Alberta, Canada shared some similar stories of the Windamere with me and graciously passed along the accompanying photograph of Mrs. Tenduf-la at the Windamere in Darjeeling.

Ken Pearce of the U.K. provided the following update in May 2001: “I was [in Darjeeling] last month, having made a return there after 50 years. I went to school in St Paul’s which is on the hill towards Jalapahar overlooking Darjeeling. The Toy train is still running. It is now a World Heritage Site, so it’s future looks assured. I stayed at the Windamere. It had not changed much since my youth! That was nice because I thought modern Darjeeling was appalling! My school was a welcome bit of continuity, too. You’ll be pleased to know that Mrs Tenduf-la is still going strong, in her 96th year. She is at the hotel every morning where she oversees everything with a bright and critical eye. She is a remarkable lady.”

I do not usually travel with a camera. I find that a camera can often come between me and whatever place I am visiting. In general, I would rather trust to my memory to preserve the images of the places I visit. However, the Land Rovers of Darjeeling overcame my stubborn resistance to making a photographic record of my travels. On my second or third day in Darjeeling I went out and purchased a cheap camera to take some snaps of Darjeeling’s Land Rovers for my Web site. ■

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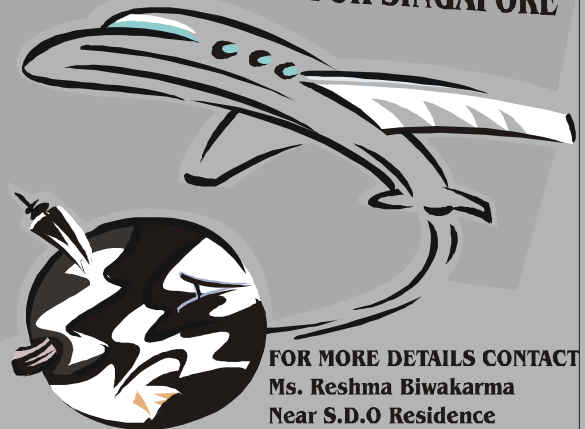
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FACTS ON DARJEELING

Extracted from the popular book
Fallen Cicadas written by
Barun Roy & Sanjay Das

The Police Establishment

Dr. Campbell's letter to the Council

I beg leave to bring to the notice of Government that in para 2 of my letter of the 1st August last submitting Draft of Rules for the settlement of Darjeeling 1 stated that on granting me the power (of) Magistrate, it would be necessary to allow a small Police establishment of 1 writer at 20 Rupees per month, and 4 chuprassies at 5 Rupees each, total 40 Rupees. This portion of my letter has not been as yet replied to. May I beg the early attention of Government to it and sanction to the above expense from the 15th instant.

This time the point was taken and the requests complied with and authorized. Darjeeling's first police force had been established.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Holy Spirit thou who
makes me see
everything and show me
the way to reach my
ideal. You who gives me
the divine gift to forget
and forgive the wrong
that is done to me. I in
this short dialogue want
to thank you and
confirm once more that
I never want to be
separated from you. I
want to be with you and
your loved ones in your
perpetual glory.
Amen**

Puneet & Divya

ANSWER TO JUMBLE PRINTED IN VOL 3 ISS 5

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BRAIN Teasers

With
Suraj Mani Pradhan



1. Name the author of the books, "Darjeeling Ko Rajnatik Paryabekshan" & "Ajnan Mahakaylan"
2. He was nabbed on 27th March 1944 in Kohima, court martialled on 5th July 1944 and hanged in the jail premises on 25th August 1944. Name this freedom fighter.
3. His cemetery is very close to the Darjeeling Govt. College. He was an Ornithologist. Identify him.
4. In 1868 a club was founded at THORN Cottage in Darjeeling. It was later shifted to the Alice Villa and then to its present location. Name this famous club of Darjeeling.
5. Which talented singer from Darjeeling was asked by Hindi music director LUK-KUSH to sing in one of their films in the 1990 but he backed off in the last minute due to personal reasons?

Answers to questions in the last issue

1. Sahid Dal Bahadur Gurung
2. Sardar Bahadur Sonam Wangphel Lepcha
3. Friends Union, Kalimpong
4. Kanchenjunga
5. 1st April 1916

Winner: (Vol 3, Iss 4)

Yaman Ghatani, Kalimpong

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M	A	R	T	O	L	I	A	R	A	M	L	I

Hidden in the above jumple are the names of fourteen local implements that local workmen use (eg. KARNI). You are required to find them out and send us your correct entry in a separate sheet of paper (please do not tear the above, you may xerox the above if you want).

Please send in your entry with the coupon given below by the 30th June 2007 to win a fabulous gift hamper sponsored by Himalayan Times (Nepali). The correct answers for the jumple published in the last issue is given on page number 18.

The winner will be decided by a draw of lots. The names of all those who sent in correct answers for the jumple in the last issue are S.T. Lepcha, Gebu karthak, Mohan Biswakarma, Reema Singh, Disesh Rizal, Sonam Wangchum, Suraj Thami, Bikash Chhetri, Susan Chhetri, Gloria Pradhan, Arup Das, amber Gurung, Neeraj Gurung, Bimal Pradhan, Saraj Amhed, Tashi Choppel, Anurag Subba, Ananya Golay, Samten Kaboo, Mahesh Agarwal, Suresh Likden, Anita Rai, Binod Bhujel, Micheal Gurung, Tillmaya Bhujel, Adity Chhetri, Sujata Rai, Nimala Kalikoty, Kavita Sinha and the lucky winner is-

Prakash Bushal of Kalimpong

Please submit your entry in a plain sheet of paper alongwith this coupon. Please do not tear this page to submit your entry.



**jumble
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MAN OF ACTION

Mr. T.P.HISHEY

Ms. Monila De

Mr. Pempa Hishey was a pioneer in conceiving and running the first taxi service from Kalimpong to Siliguri. He started with just one taxi. As the demand grew so did his number of taxis. My parents always hired his taxi to go down to Siliguri or come up. I remember him clearly even though I was very small. I went with parents to his tiny office near Maharani Chowk. He was a slim, talk, dark man very unlike his first born son Tashi Pempa Hishey. He took over his father's business and ran it very efficiently.

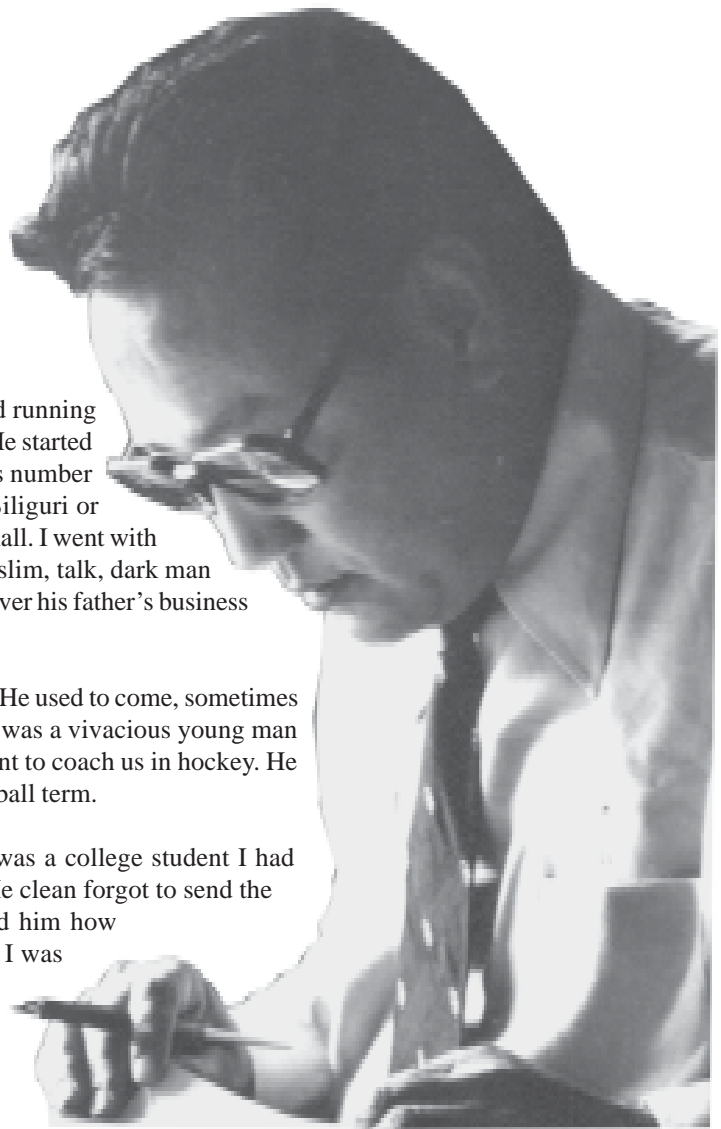
I first met Tashi at the Kalimpong Tennis club as a teenager. He used to come, sometimes to play tennis accompanied by his two young children. He was a vivacious young man interested in various sports. He went to St. Joseph's Convent to coach us in hockey. He got together the divers from the motor stand to form a football team.

Tashi had a taxi service going up to Darjeeling. When I was a college student I had booked a seat in his Landrover to take me to Darjeeling. He clean forgot to send the car to pick me up from Monjula. Ma rang Tashi and told him how disappointed I was to have been let down. Specially since I was going to attend a lose friend's birthday in Darjeeling. He immediately sent a small black Austin to reach me free of cost I rode all the way to Darjeeling in solitary splendour and comfort.

When he became the Chairman of the Kalimpong Municipality he was thrilled with the post. With great enthusiasm he started cleaning up the town systematically and efficiently. One day, I told him how filthy our town was. "You haven't been to town recently have you?" he asked. "No" I answered. "Well then, come and inspect it. I will take a bet with you, if you find any dirt or filth I will give you dinner and if you don't, you'll have to invite me". Done", I said and went to inspect the town area, right down to the 'haat'. To my amazement, I couldn't find any garbage lying around, no dirt, filth or litter anywhere. The drains were swept clean too. I was overjoyed and gladly invited him, his wife and Mrs Yata for a sumptuous dinner at Monjula.

Whatever he took up he would do seriously, to perfection. As chief of the Home Guards he turned country folks into smart and efficient guards. In later years he took to collecting whatever took his fancy and filled his office with it. Once it was a collection of old knives and weapons. The three feet long "Khukuri" in a silver sheath took the pride of place. Next were animal horns and antlers from a variety of animals. One day his office was filled with pots of rare and gorgeous orchids.

The rooms upstairs were filled with precious object d'art but I think, he loved his miniature collection of objects most which he had collected from all around the world. His most precious possession was a gold locket which the Dalai Lama had presented to him. He always wore it and was devastated when it was snatched from him at gun point on a street in Kolkata.



As Chairman of the Kalimpong Municipality

After he became the Chairman of the Kalimpong Municipality he went about with great enthusiasm cleaning up the town systematically and efficiently.

One evening Tashi and his wife were invited for dinner at Dr. Salil Panja's house in Kolkata. Late at night, after dinner, Salil and his wife accompanied their guests to the main door to see them off. While the ladies were still inside indulging in last minute gossip, the two men ere already on the pavement outside, walking leisurely towards the car standing at the kerb. Suddenly three young men surrounded them. One pointed a gun at Tashi, the second one whipped out a dagger and held it at Salil's throat rendering him helpless. The third man started emptying their hostage's pockets. As he snatched Tashi's gold chain with the Dalai Lama's locket on it, Tashi gave a mighty roar and lashed out at him with his fists, being a man of action. The robbers were taken by surprise. A scuffle followed in which Tashi displacing a few of their teeth, sent the gun flying.

To stop this raging bull from getting the better of his companions, the third man pressed the tip of the dagger into Salil's throat. Blood spurted out. Salil screamed in agony to stop Tashi from bashing his adversaries or the thug would have no compunction in pushing the dagger all the way into his throat. Tashi realising the danger Salil was in, stopped bashing them and stood helplessly as the three men disappeared swiftly into the night with their loot.

This holdup was not planned, it was just a case of the robbers being at the right place at the right time. A golden opportunity for them and an unfortunate and traumatic one for their victims.

The whole episode did not last for more than a few minutes. The two ladies were not even aware of what took place in that short interval that separated them from their husbands.

The chain and locket were never recovered. Perhaps this incident prompted Tashi to find a policeman as his son-in-law.



As chief of the Home Guards

When he became the Chief of the Home Guards he turned country folks into smart and efficient guards.

He was the life and soul of every party. He loved to dance and kept the ladies on their feet. His sense of humour was most hilarious specially since he could laugh at himself. His outrageous stories brought forth gales of laughter from everyone present. We never got tired of them. He had a talent of telling them complete with actions. I will relate two of them. I can't do justice to them of course.

During his tenure as the Kalimpong Municipality Chairman, a manhole of a sewage line was severely choked. The frothing and bubbling human excreta stank to high heavens. The jamadars' failed to open it. Watching their futile efforts, Tashi donned on his shorts, a bandana and jumped into the cesspool and started hauling out buckets full. Soon, he was covered in the stuff, a crowd gathered at a safe distance, to see this mad man in action. Being an incorrigible exhibitionist,

he enjoyed the attention and started jumping up and down in the huge hole, splattering the much all around. People ran helter skelter to avoid being splashed. He himself was covered in it. "It was much more fun than playing 'Holi,'" he said.

The second incident is just as hilarious. He had been invited to the King of Bhutan's coronation along with the Macdonald sisters of the Himalayan Hotel. One evening at a royal party, he was dancing with Vera Macdonald. While he was twirling and twisting her around vigorously, she suddenly stood stock still as if rooted to the floor. Surprised, he looked down and saw a thick woolen object encircling her feet. "What is that?" he whispered to Vera. "Oh my panties". Vera whispered back red in the face. To save her more embarrassment. He stooped down, whipped the panty off the floor, stuffed it in his coat pocket and kept dancing casually with her, as if nothing had happened. □

All Photos courtesy his family

picture of the month

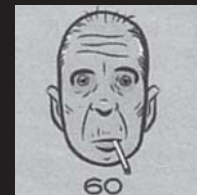
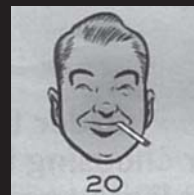


A seller hawking her *Nanglos* in the Kalimpong market

She says that in the past she used to sell more than two dozen *nanglos* each day now she feels lucky if she sell five a day. "Plastic substitutes are the main reasons why people have given up use of this traditional item", she says

Tech helps you peek into your Health Future

Need help breaking your bad habits? A new techonology may shock you into action. For smokers, a camera takes a photo of your face and ages it ten or more years to show what you will look like with smoking induced wrinkles.



Source: Readers Digest October 2006



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THEIR WORDS OUR VOCABULARY

By Dr.S.B. Wangyel

Namastay, 'namaskar', and 'pranam'. greetings to all the readers of the HT. Let us take the salutations first was once used only by the Brahmins and it came is the Sanskrit 'namas te' or honour to thee. The second one was more universal and is the mildly reduced colloquial form of 'namasskara'. The last salutation similarly is from 'pranama' and means 'obeisance' and has become popular with the Hindus known as the Pranamis. Just a small info before we go to the main body of the essay: it is remarkable that most words in Nepali/Hindi beginning with 'pr' as in 'pranam' originate from the Sanskrit. Now to the main essay we have had so many references to European words that it might be a good idea to start with 'firanghee'. It is a word that describes the Europeans and it sprung from the Persian 'farangi' / 'firingi'. Strongly contesting this would be the Arabic 'al-faranj' or 'ifranji' but phonetically the Persian words seem to be at an advantage. The word's association with the Europeans was so strong that once upon a time the straight swords made by the local natives in imitation of the ones used by the Portuguese were also called 'farhangi' or 'phirangi'. Another Arabic/Persian sounding word is 'fakir' and to us it means poor or a bankrupt person. The Arabic 'fakir' almost means the same but it refers particularly to someone poor on the sight of God. Since the word also refers to Muslim religious mendicants the Hindus also claimed it for the religious naked ascetics. Another person poor in the sight of God would be a 'haramzada' and the word found a home in our vocabulary through the Arabic/ Persian word with same pronunciation. Literally it means a bastard but it is not used in that sense but more so as a common abuse meaning a scoundrel. So a 'haramzada' would be a 'badmash' person. Both the words almost mean the same but the latter has a more specific meaning and goes a little beyond our interpretation of a wicked person. This hybrid word comes to us from the Persian 'bad' meaning 'evil' and the Arabic 'ma' ash' that translates as 'means of livelihood'. The Persian language has, you must have realized it by now, a huge contribution to our language and another word that springs to my mind is 'sardar'. To many of us it simply means a senior contractor but the Persian 'sardar' stood for a leader, a commander or an officer and at times even a chief or a lord. Maybe we can find some justification in the fact that a superior contractor commands a lot of coolies under him. To end this essay, I offer you my 'salaam' and this incidentally means 'peace' in the Arabic and I would like to part in peace and meet again sometime later, in peace. Salaam.

**Dr.S.B.Wangyel's latest book
"Footprints in the Himalaya"
is available in all leading book
stalls in Darjeeling, Kalimpong,
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This photograph taken in 1890 is of a Dandy with its carriers. Dandies used to be the favoured mode of transport for the European residing in the town then.

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